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SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000673

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2012

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SUBJECT: THE KABILA GOVERNMENT: THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1/5 B/D.

SUMMARY

11. (C) THE GOVERNMENT OF JOSEPH KABILA FEELS MUCH PUT UPON THESE DAYS AND FRUSTRATED THAT IT HAS FEW OPTIONS TO EXERCISE IN TERMS OF SHAPING THE WORLD AROUND IT. IT IS FEELING THE PRESSURE OF OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE INTER-CONGOLESE DIALOG (ICD) FOR WHICH IT WAS ILL PREPARED, IT HAS BEEN HUMILIATED IN MOLIRO, ITS ALLIES ARE GIVING TEPID SUPPORT AS THEY PURSUE THEIR OWN INTERESTS, AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REMAINS RESERVED. KABILA VALUES USG APPROVAL AND ENCOURAGEMENT, AND THAT GIVES US SOME LIMITED LEVERAGE TO INFLUENCE HIM TO CONTINUE REFORMS TO TO GRAPPLE WITH TOUGH DECISIONS HE NEEDS TO MAKE. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) THE FRACTURED OPPOSITION -- ARMED REBEL GROUPS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY -- ARE UNITED ON ONE BASIC POINT: THEY WANT A SLICE OF THE PIE IN KINSHASA. THE ARMED GROUPS CONTROL AROUND FIFTY PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY, BUT THEY DO NOT CONTROL KINSHASA AND THEY DO NOT HAVE THE THIN VENEER OF LEGITIMACY THAT THE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION ACCORDS TO KABILA. THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIC GROUPS ARE HUNGRY AND JUST WANT IN.

13. (C) UNFORTUNATELY, THE KABILA GOVERNMENT HAS ILL PREPARED ITSELF FOR THE ICD IN SUN CITY. THE GOVERNMENT, TO ITS CREDIT, DID MAKE SOME OVERTURES TO JEAN-PIERRE BEMBA OF THE MLC. THE FACT THAT THESE OVERTURES HAVE NOT BORNE MUCH FRUIT IS AS MUCH DUE TO THE UNBRIDLED AMBITIONS OF BEMBA AS IT IS TO THE HALF-HEARTED NATURE OF KABILA'S EFFORTS. ONUSUMBA OF THE RCD, VERY MUCH UNDER RWANDA'S THUMB, IS BASICALLY BEYOND THE PALE AND WOULD ONLY BE COURTED AS AN ALLY BY KABILA AS A VERY LAST RESORT. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT MADE ONLY SPORADIC EFFORTS TO REACH OUT TO CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL PARTIES. THE GOVERNMENT DID MANAGE TO PERSUADE MASIRE TO ENLARGE THE POLITICAL PARTY CONTINGENT TO INCLUDE SOME POLITICAL FIGURES COOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT ONLY AT THE COST OF ANTAGONIZING WHAT PASSES AS THE POLITICAL CLASS IN KINSHASA.

14. (C) THE KABILA GOVERNMENT IS HAVING TROUBLE COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE IDEA OF SHARING POWER. CERTAINLY, LAURENT KABILA NEVER CAME TO GRIPS WITH THAT CONCEPT. JOSEPH HAS COME TO THAT CONCLUSION ONLY RELUCTANTLY AND AT GREAT RESISTANCE WITHIN HIS OWN CAMP, BUT SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN LITTLE THOUGHT AS TO HOW TO APPROACH THE NEGOTIATIONS OTHER THAN TRYING TO PUT HIS OWN POSITION AS PRESIDENT OFF LIMITS. CONVERSATIONS WITH KABILA AND FOREIGN MINISTER OKITUNDU (THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT DELEGATION IN SUN CITY) INDICATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAME UP WITH HARD-LINE OPENING POSITIONS AND, DEPENDING ON THE REACTIONS, WILL THEN ADJUST THOSE POSITIONS. IT HAS GIVEN LITTLE THOUGHT TO FALLBACK POSITIONS, LET ALONE DEVELOPING AN ACTIVE STRATEGY TO GUIDE THE INEVITABLE COMPROMISES THAT MUST EMERGE AT THE ICD.

15. (C) THE GOVERNMENT MADE TACTICAL ERRORS IN WALKING OUT OF THE ICD BOTH IN ADDIS ABABA AND IN SUN CITY. KABILA AND OKITUNDU ARE AWARE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS QUESTIONING THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE DIALOG.

MOLIRO HUMILIATION

16. (C) THE FALL OF MOLIRO, A SMALL BUT STRATEGIC PORT ON

LAKE TANGANYIKA, ON MARCH 16 TO RCD FORCES HAS BEEN A PAINFUL HUMILIATION TO THE GOVERNMENT. BUT EVEN IN THE CASE OF MOLIRO, THE GOVERNMENT GARNERS LITTLE SYMPATHY AS THE WRONGED PARTY. THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT DECLARE MOLIRO AS A NEW DEFENSIVE POSITION IN THE HARARE SUB-ACCORDS AND THUS WAS IN VIOLATION OF THE LUSAKA ACCORDS. FURTHERMORE, THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN GUILTY OF USING MOLIRO AS A BASE FOR SUPPLYING MAI-MAI AND HUTU MILITIAMEN AND FOR HARRASSING RCD AND RWANDAN FORCES NORTH ALONG THE LAKE SHORE, SOMETHING WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CONSISTENTLY DENIED.

NO MILITARY OPTION

17. (C) THE HUMILIATION DOES NOT STOP WITH THE FALL OF MOLIRO. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE FOND OF REPEATING THAT GOVERNMENT FORCES WERE NOT DEFEATED ON THE BATTLE FIELD, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE MANAGED TO LOSE FIFTY PERCENT OF THE COUNTY. THAT IS DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT THE CONGOLESE ARMED FORCES (FAC) IS BY AND LARGE A RAGTAG ARMY MORE GIVEN TO FLIGHT THAN TO FIGHT. ALLIES ZIMBABWE AND ANGOLA SEEM LITTLE INCLINED TO GET MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN CONGO EXCEPT TO PROTECT THEIR OWN INTERESTS. THE GOVERNMENT REALIZES THAT TODAY IT HAS LITTLE TO NO MILITARY OPTION TO EXERCISE, SHOULD POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS FAIL.

UNDER APPRECIATED

18. (C) JOSEPH KABILA IS PUZZLED THAT HIS EFFORTS ARE NOT FULLY APPRECIATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HIS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS HAVE BEEN MET WITH MILD ENCOURAGEMENT, BUT HE HAS NOT BEEN EMBRACED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE SENSE OF DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE IMF AND THE WORLD BANK ARE THE MOST RESPONSIVE, BUT EVEN THERE HE IS HAVING GREAT DIFFICULTY MEETING THEIR MINIMAL STANDARDS THAT WILL LEAD TO ASSISTANCE IN THE SHORT TERM. KABILA'S EFFORTS AT DDRRR HAVE EARNED HIM AS MUCH CRITICISM AS THEY HAVE CREDIT. NO DOUBT IT TOOK GREAT EFFORT ON HIS PART TO OVERCOME THE OBJECTIONS OF MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY KONGOLO AND OTHERS IN CANTONING 1,800 (AND NOT THE 3,000 HE FIRST ANNOUNCED) IN KAMINA, BUT THE DELAYING TACTICS OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE FLIRTING WITH THE RWANDAN OPPOSITION GROUP FDLR PRECLUDED A POSITIVE REACTION FROM RWANDA. EVEN HIS PROPOSAL TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL TO FORM A COMMISSION TO MOVE DDRRR FORWARD AROUSED LITTLE INTEREST.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE USG

19. (C) THE KABILA GOVERNMENT APPEARS BUFFETED BY EVENTS WITH NO COHERENT STRATEGIC VISION OF HOW TO SHAPE THE POLITICAL TRANSITION IN CONGO. KABILA NEEDS AND WANTS USG APPROVAL AND ENCOURAGEMENT, ALTHOUGH HE WOULD PREFER THAT BOTH TAKE ON MORE CONCRETE FORM IN TERMS OF ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION. WE THEREFORE HAVE SOME (ALBEIT LIMITED) LEVERAGE TO INFLUENCE HIM TO CONTINUE REFORMS AND TO GRAPPLE WITH AT LEAST SOME OF THE TOUGH DECISIONS FACING HIM, HELPING HIM TO UNDERSTAND THAT, WHILE THE ICD MAY NOT BE A VERY COMFORTABLE FIT, LIKE CINDERELLA, HE HAS TO SQUEEZE HIS FOOT INTO THE DIALOG SHOE IF HE IS GOING TO GET CONGO BACK ON TRACK.

HOOKS